

# Finding Ways: A Conference on Art, Culture, and Economic Development in San Antonio

November 12, 2003

7:30 AM to 3:15 PM

Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio, TX

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## REPORT

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### INTRODUCTION

The City of San Antonio is currently engaged in a community cultural planning initiative, ***The Cultural Collaborative: A Community Plan for San Antonio's Creative Economy***. The Cultural Collaborative (TCC) is a community partnership to enhance San Antonio's cultural resources and position our city for greater economic investment. Through cooperative effort, the public, private, and cultural sectors of our community are working to develop a plan to create a thriving creative industry in San Antonio.

On November 12, 2003, the Office of Cultural Affairs, in conjunction with the Department of Economic Development, launched TCC through ***Finding Ways: A Conference on Art, Culture, and Economic Development in San Antonio***. The daylong event was a free, public conference to engage the community in a developmental dialogue. Approximately 450 members of the San Antonio area community attended the Conference. Attendees represented:

- A diverse cross-section of the San Antonio community, with emphasis on the arts, culture, creative and business sectors
- Artists and arts patrons
- Arts and cultural organizations
- Civic leaders, including Mayor Edward D. Garza and Bexar County Judge Nelson W. Wolff
- Neighborhood leaders
- TCC Steering and Executive Committees

- University and educational representatives
- Public agency representatives (i.e. SAHA, SAWS, and VIA)

The conference commenced with the first official meeting of **TCC's Steering Committee**, which is comprised of eighty-one community leaders. The meeting served as an orientation session for the Steering Committee, and included a brief background history of TCC, committee members' responsibilities, and a proposed six-month schedule.

Following the steering committee meeting, Finding Ways featured a public presentation by internationally known speaker **Dr. Richard Florida**, author of the best-selling book *Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. After the keynote address, the Conference Work Sessions were facilitated by Florence Macdaniel and Richard Alvarado of the Nonprofit Resource Center, and Don Gomes, an independent facilitator.

The Conference also presented **Revive** performances throughout the day by several local arts organizations and groups. Similarly, another key attraction of the conference was the **Creative Resource Exchange Room**. The Exchange Room allowed for approximately 40 local exhibitors to distribute information, speak with attendees, and demonstrate their organizations capabilities. The Creative Exchange Room participants included:

- San Antonio's arts and cultural organizations
- Creative Businesses
- Non-profit organizations
- City of San Antonio public art services

Also present was **State of the Art with Michael Mehl**, San Antonio's only local television program exploring the interaction between artists, arts organizations, and art-related businesses. Throughout the conference, Michael Mehl and crew filmed and interviewed a variety of key speakers and conference attendees. This episode aired on November 13, 15 and 16, 2003.

The focus of Finding Ways was to establish the important connection of arts, culture and creativity to economic development. Through this focus, the conference's objectives included:

- Highlighting arts and culture in San Antonio
- Launching and publicizing TCC
- Gathering and exchanging information and ideas to inform TCC
- Identifying and securing participants for TCC

In short, this report is a brief chronological synopsis of the conference to help document the event and comments made by the participants. This report should not be viewed as an end product, but as raw data to inform future dialogue and guide the efforts of The Cultural Collaborative, scheduled to begin in January 2004.

## CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

### PRE-CONFERENCE MEETING OF THE CULTURAL COLLABORATIVE STEERING COMMITTEE Room 101 A-B - 7:30 AM

During the orientation session, committee members were asked the following three questions:

- Why are you interested in the Cultural Collaborative?
- What do you bring to the table?
- What are your expectations?

#### **Committee responses can be found in Appendix I.**

In conjunction with a continental breakfast, musicians of the San Antonio Symphony opened the conference with an hour-long symphonic performance. During this time, attendees had a chance to collect their nametags and conference packets. At 9:00 AM, participants were seated and welcomed to *Finding Ways* by Felix Padrón, director of the Office of Cultural Affairs. Mayor Garza and Bexar County Judge Wolff then addressed the audience regarding San Antonio's current creative climate.

#### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS: DR. RICHARD FLORIDA** Mission Room- 9:00 AM

Dr. H. Randall Goldsmith, executive director of San Antonio Technology Accelerator Initiative (SATAI), introduced the keynote speaker, Dr. Richard Florida.

Key points of Florida's speech on the relationship of economic development to the creative class included:

- The creative class consists of scientists, engineers, architects, educators, writers, artists, and entertainers. Common characteristics of this class are creativity, individuality, diversity, and merit.
- Technology or the marketplace does not impose social change, rather, modern society has chosen to alter its values, work, and lifestyle:
  - Current economic function is to create new ideas, new technology, and new creative content. This is what adds value.
  - The creative class has affected economic transformation dramatically: In 1900, 5% of the US population was involved in "creative work;" in the 1950's – 10%; in the 1980's – 12%. Currently, 50% of salaries accrue to the creative class. A full 2/3 of the economy is in the creative sector. The creative class includes over 40 million members, 30% of the US workforce.
- People are the source of the creative edge that technology and other industries require.
  - All are creative, not just those associated with colleges and universities.
  - Talented people are drawn to or stay in communities with visible signs of diversity. Community openness translates to mobility of resources.
  - Diversity is the breeding ground of creativity and the source of economic growth. Where the "Bohemian Index" is high, there is a good economy.

- Companies and corporate structures are not the prevalent or preferred models for economic development.
  - A sense of place is significant.
  - A critical mass of creative people is the source of economic, aesthetic, and civic strength.

Florida concluded his speech by stating that successful communities have the three T's: Technology, Talent, and Tolerance.

Following a short break and chance to visit the Creative Exchange Room, the audience returned to a dynamic presentation of poetry by the Sol City Slam Team.

### **WORK SESSION I: UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES**

Mission Room 11:00 AM

Work Session I consisted of five focused presentations by several guests from the San Antonio business and cultural community.

**Lew Moorman**, vice president of strategy and corporate development for Rackspace Managed Hosting, spoke on *Attracting Entrepreneurs to San Antonio*. His speech highlighted:

- A short history of the birth and growth of Rackspace Managed Hosting
- Financial capital is necessary for entrepreneurial efforts, but the most important capital is people
- Quality of “place” and long-term commitment is critical in recruitment and retention of a capable workforce
- Elements that would help to foster a “sense of place” in San Antonio include:
  - Downtown planning for residents first, tourists second
  - Developing a broader reach of existing cultural assets
  - Support for cultural entrepreneurs
  - Long- and short-term investments in recreational resources
  - Marketing San Antonio’s authenticity

**Jon Hinojosa**, executive director of SAY Sí and a visual artist, and **Jim LaVilla-Havelin**, young artist programs director at the Southwest School of Art and Craft, presented *An Update on the Advances and Deficiencies of Public School Arts Education in San Antonio*. Their discussion focused on the results of *The Arts Dynamic: A Survey and Analysis of Arts Education in San Antonio Area Schools*, a report commissioned by The San Antonio Arts in Education Task Force. The report found:

- A serious lack of arts in education programs within the schools throughout Bexar County
- Art education programs, provided by outside agencies, helped to fill this deficiency
- Arts in education helps to build an informed, problem solving, employable, and engaged populace

This report cited many community arts programs as positive, including:

- Northside ISD where there is one arts instructor per school
- Say Sí’s in its 10<sup>th</sup> year and the Southwest School of Arts and Craft’s Saturday Morning Discovery in its 35<sup>th</sup> year

- The Kronkosky Foundation's commitment to funding conversations regarding arts in education in the community

Negatives included:

- Loss of arts instructors in most districts and schools
- Unfunded mandate from the state regarding arts education in schools

**Pablo Miguel Martínez**, a writer and arts consultant, spoke on San Antonio's culture and tourist economy in *¿Cultural Tourism or Touristic Culture?* Martínez's main points included:

- Tourism in San Antonio generates \$4.4 billion, yet little is invested back into culture
- Artists and neighborhoods need more of the arts and cultural funding
- Revitalization has the potential to displace authenticity

**James LeFlore**, coordinator of the City of San Antonio Public Art and Design Enhancement Program, spoke on public art through *Involving The Creative Public*. LeFlore's comments included:

- Public art signifies that creativity is everywhere in the community
- A strong creative sector leads to economic competitiveness and good public service

**George Cisneros**, a technology artist and composer, spoke on technology in *Between Projects: Maintaining Perspective While in Survival Mode*. Cisneros main points included:

- Community backbone is a "spine" of artists
- Peaks and valleys are a reality for many artists and these gaps need to be lessened
- San Antonio needs advised planners to balance "safe" decisions versus the challenges of growth

After a second break, **THE URBAN-15 GROUP** re-energized attendees with a lively dance and musical presentation of *Carnaval de San Anto!* Lunch was served at 12:15 PM.

## **WORK SESSION II: NEXT STEPS**

During and following lunch, attendees were asked to choose a round-table group, with no less than 6 people per table. Each table was asked to designate a table leader and a table recorder. All participants were given paper and pens.

After an initial warm-up exercise, during which participants were asked to recall and consider the most striking ideas and concepts that had been presented during the morning, each table was asked to list and prioritize the central issues and key problem areas as they saw them. Utilizing the information provided during the conference, participants were asked four sessions of key questions:

**Session I:** What words or phrases stand out in your mind from this morning's speakers? What ideas or suggestions do you remember?

**Session II:** What about this morning's presentations seems most exciting to you? What concerns you? What issues or ideas seem the most critical?

**Session III:** What appears to be the central issue or key problem area relative to:

1. Attracting, Retaining, and Growing Businesses and Creative Individuals
2. Revitalizing the Urban Fabric
3. Fostering a Creative Workforce through Arts Education
4. Giving a Competitive Advantage to Cultural Tourism

**Session IV-a:** What are we really committed to and what is really important to us with regard to:

1. Attracting, Retaining, and Growing Businesses and Creative Individuals
2. Revitalizing the Urban Fabric
3. Fostering a Creative Workforce through Arts Education
4. Giving a Competitive Advantage to Cultural Tourism

**Session IV-b:** What application or action ideas has this triggered for you?

**Generated by participants during the work sessions, the responses to the above questions are recorded in Appendices II through VI, which are attached as separate documents.**

The conference's objective of getting people from a variety of backgrounds and viewpoints to work together was a success. The process of brainstorming, discussion and consensus building, prioritizing and recording was repeated for a series of questions over the course of the afternoon. The session lasted over three hours from lunch until 3 p.m.

At the conclusion of Work Session II, **Magik Theatre** entertained the audience with brief selections from Richard Rosen's *La Cinderella* and Arthur Miller's play, *Resurrection Blues*.

#### **CLOSING REMARKS**

Following the performance, Felix Padrón reviewed the conference's discussion points. He noted that the work session results would be compiled, distributed, and ultimately be made available on the OCA website. He also gave a brief outline of the planning process for The Cultural Collaborative and its appointed committee. Thanking the attendees for their participation, Padrón brought the conference to a close.

**CONFERENCE ADJOURNED: 3:15 PM**

## APPENDICES

Steering Committee Comments	<u>Appendix I</u>	<u>attachment</u>
Work Sessions/ Participants Comments		
Session I	<u>Appendix II</u>	<u>attachment</u>
Session II	<u>Appendix III</u>	<u>attachment</u>
Session III	<u>Appendix IV</u>	<u>attachment</u>
Session IV-a	<u>Appendix V</u>	<u>attachment</u>
Session IV-b	<u>Appendix VI</u>	<u>attachment</u>
Finding Ways Press	Appendix VII	pg. 7

Please note that appendices I - VI are attached as separate documents. These appendices document the comments made by conference participants during the work sessions. Each quadrant indicates comments collected from one table.

## Appendix VII

### Finding Ways Press

Finding Ways garnished an ample amount of press, including articles in the following publications:

- 11/06 The San Antonio Current, *Making Art Pay in San Antonio* by Lisa Sorg
- 11/07 San Antonio Express-News, *Bill Day: On Tattoos and Development* by Analisa Nazareno
- 11/12 Express-News, *Creativity Gap to be Studied* by Dan R. Goddard
- 11/13 Express-News, *City Urged to Think Outside the Box* by Dan R. Goddard
- 11/13 Express-News, *Cisneros Sees West Side as a More Colorful Rockwell* by Edmund Tijerina
- 11/15 Express-News, *Economic Miracle Could Rely on Arts*
- 11/15 Express-News, *Nacho Guarache* by Leo Garza
- 11/16 Express-News, *Nurturing the Alamo City's Creativity a Step in the Hip Direction* by Jan Jarboe Russell
- 11/16 Express-News, *Nacho Guarache* by Leo Garza
- 11/20 Current, *The Collaborative Kickoff* by Elaine Wolff
- 11/23 Express-News, *City's Energy Diluted* by Lincoln Strawhun
- 11/23 Express-News, *Creativity Talk Has a Positive Ring To It* by Mike Greenberg

**To view the full articles and other TCC information visit our website at <http://www.sanantonio.gov/art/website/tcc.asp>**